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ABSTRACT

A modification of the Family Adaptation Scale of Antonovsky and Sourani (1988), was developed for assessing the adaptation of ministers' families. A sample of 317 individuals (ministers, spouses, and children aged 8 to 18) from 135 protestant ministers' families was used to test the scale. The self-report questionnaire was tested for internal reliability. Tests for construct validity, concurrent validity, and internal consistency reliability supported the use of the scale for measuring adaptation in ministers' families. Availability of such a measure provides information about how effectively ministers' families see their internal functioning and relations with church and community. One table presents principal components information. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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Measuring Adaptation in Ministers' Families: The Modified Family Adaptation Scale*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a modification of the Family Adaptation Scale developed to use for assessing the adaptation of ministers' families. A sample of 317 individuals from 135 ministers' families was used to test the scale. The self-report questionnaire was tested for internal reliability. Tests for construct validity, concurrent validity, and internal consistency reliability supported the use of the scale for measuring adaptation in ministers' families.

Measuring Adaptation in Ministers' Families: The Modified Family Adaptation Scale

According to family stress theory, as families progress over time they face a range of predictable and unpredictable changes (McCubbin, Thompson, Pirner, & McCubbin, 1988). As families respond to these changes levels of adaptation may increase or decrease, depending upon a variety of factors such as the nature of the stressors, the resources available for addressing the stressors, and the way the family perceives the situation (McCubbin et al., 1988).

Scholarship on ministers' families indicates that these families not only face the typical stresses faced by families in general, but they also face a variety of stresses related to the close association of the family system with the church (Ostrander & Henry, 1990; Lee & Balswick, 1989). Such stressors may include congregational expectations, feelings of isolation, or aspects of the family's public life such as lack of privacy (Lee & Balswick, 1989; Blanton, 1992; Ostrander, Ceglian, & Fournier, 1993; Ostrander & Henry, 1990; Ostrander, Henry, & Hendrix, 1990). Although recent scholarship explored the types of stressors most common in ministers' families, little consideration has been given to the measurement of how ministers' families adapt to such stressors.

McCubbin and Patterson (1983) conceptualized family adaptation as encompassing three levels: the adaptation of individual family members, the adaptation of the overall family unit, and the fit between the family and the broader community. In addition, Antonovsky and Sourani (1988) note that one indicator of adaptation is the satisfaction of family members with their family. Despite considerable attention to the stressors in ministers' families, however, the adaptation of ministers' families has received minimal investigation (Ostrander, 1991). The lack of research aimed at understanding how ministers' families perceive themselves and their functioning may be due, in part, to a shortage of measurement instruments that address ministers' families (Lee & Balswick, 1989; Ostrander et al., 1993; Ostrander et al., 1990). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to test a measure of family adaptation in ministers' families for internal consistency reliability, construct validity, and concurrent validity.

Methods

Ministers identified from the national mailing lists from five protestant groups received letters asking if they (1) had children between the ages of 8 and 18, and (2) would be willing to participate in this study. From the 1200 addresses contacted, a total of 169 families responded that they met the study requirements and would participate. These families were contacted using the Dillman (1978) mail out survey method. These families received copies of the self-report questionnaires to be completed by the minister, spouse and any children between the ages of 8 and 18. Of the 169

families, 135 (80%) participated in the study, representing the (1) the Episcopal Church, a mainline group (n = 42 families); the Churches of Christ, a fundamental group (n = 44 families); (3) and three groups represented evangelical branch groups (i.e., Wesleyan, Christian Missionary Alliance, and Free Methodist churches, n = 46); and three families did not their religious affiliations (Latourette, 1965). Individual family members included 135 ministers, 113 spouses, and 69 children aged 8 to 18, for a total sample of 317 subjects.

The scale tested for this study was a modification of the Family Adaptation Scale (FAS; Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). Antonovsky and Sourani's (1988) original 11-item semantic differential scale, written in Hebrew, contained 10 items scored from 1 = completely satisfied to 7 = dissatisfied. Of the questions, five addressed internal family functioning, two were directed at family-community fit, and 3 were generic questions (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). Using a sample of 60 Israeli men classified as at least 40% disabled and their wives, the authors established internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) of .87 on the 10 items for the total sample of husbands and wives, .85 for husbands, and .81 for wives. An eleventh question asked about the overall adjustment of the family and was scored from 1 = ideally adjusted family to 7 = a family which is not at all adjusted.

Since the current study involved both adults and children, two changes were made to the English version of the FAS (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988) (1) items were reworded and simplified to use language that could be understood by children, (2) the items were changed from the semantic differential scale to a Likert-type scale. To illustrate the modification, the question "are you satisfied in belonging to your family" was reworded to state "are you happy being a member of your family." Five items were added to the scale to enhance the measurement of adaptation related to the family-community fit, with an emphasis on the family-church fit. The following response choices on the items corresponding to the first 10 items of the original scale and the five new items: 1 = no, I am not happy at all, 2 = I am a little unhappy, 3 = I am not unhappy, but I am not happy either, 4 = I am happy, and 5 = I am very happy. The response choice corresponding to the eleventh item in the original scale was revised to 1 = My family is not like the great family at all, 2 = there are a few things about my family that make it like the great family I thought of, 3 = there are some things in my family that make it like the great family I thought of, 4 = there are quite a few things in my family that make it like the great family I thought of, and 5 = my family is just like the great family I thought of. Scores for the individual perceptions of family adaptation were computed by summing the item scores for each of the 317 subjects.

Results

High internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, Cronbach, 1951) was found for the overall 15-item modified scale (alpha = .89). Prior to conducting factor analysis, the appropriateness of the sample for factor analysis (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .91; the off-diagonal elements of the AIC Matrix < .09 = 34, 16%, the residuals above the diagonal > .05 = 42, 42%, and the Bartlett Test of Sphericity = 1749.67, $p < .001$) was verified. Principal components factoring followed by varimax rotation using SPSS^{X} (Norusis, 1988) supported the construct validity of the modified scale. Two factors emerged: (1) adaptation within the family, accounting for 41.1% of the variance and (2) family-community fit adaptation, accounting for 11.6% of the variance (see Table 1).

Concurrent validity was established in relation to two measures of family well-being the Family Hardiness Index and the Family Coherence Index (McCubbin & Thompson, 1987). The instrument was significantly correlated with the Family Hardiness Index ($r = = .73$, $p \leq .01$) and the Family Coherence Index ($r = = .24$, $p \leq .01$), indicating concurrent validity.

Discussion and Conclusions

The modified Family Adaptation Scale, developed for ministers' families, was shown to be internally reliable and to have construct and concurrent validity. Thus, this scale is useful for research with ministers' families to determine their perceived level of internal family adaptation and adaptation in relation to interactions with the church or other community systems. This instrument showed reliability while used with ministers, spouses, and children.

The availability of such measures provide an important step toward understanding how effectively ministers' families see their internal functioning and relations with the church and community. Future research is needed to test this scale with ministerial families from other groups. In addition, this scale may be useful in determining the relationship between stress in the ministerial family and their level of adaptation.

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Table 1

Principal Components Factoring Followed by Varimax Rotation for the Family Adaptation Scale

Item	1	2
Adaptation within the Family		
Are you happy with:		
The way your family members talk to each other?	.78	.16
With how close you and the other people in your family feel toward each other?	.78	.18
The way the family members respect and treat each other?	.74	.14
Now think of what you believe would be a great family to live in. How does your family compare to this great family? (Circle the answer below that describes how you feel they compare. 1) My family is not like the great family at all. 2) There are very few things in my family that make it like the great family I thought of. 3) There are some things in my family that make it like the great family I thought of. 4) There are quite a few things in my family that make it like the great family I thought of. 5) My family is much like the great family I thought of.	.71	.23
The chances you get to express what you feel in your family?	.71	.19
Being a member of your family?	.88	.23
Are you happy with:		
How your family spends time when the children are not in school and parents are not at work?	.60	.26
About how the children in your family are being raised? (like where they go to school, how they are treated for their good and bad behaviors, things the children are allowed/not allowed to do)?	.60	.29
Family Community Fit Adaptation		
Are you happy with:		
How your family acts toward church people and how they act toward you and your family?	.17	.82
How the church people treat your family?	.06	.76
How your family fits in with people and activities at church?	.23	.72
How your family fits into your neighborhood or town?	.26	.66
The amount of time your family spends in church activities?	.24	.69
Living in a minister's family?	.44	.56
How close your family is to people not in the church? (such as aunts, cousins, uncles, grandparents, friends or neighbors)	.22	.64
Eigenvalue	6.16	1.74
% of variance	41.1%	11.6%
Cronbach alpha = .89		

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Note: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .91, Bartlett Test of Sphericity = 1749.67, $p < .001$. Off-diagonal Elements of AIC Matrix > 0.09 = 34 (16.2%). Residuals above Diagonal > 0.06 = 42 (40%).